

D-2 Blank Walls and D-3 Retaining Walls

Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest. Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the street scape.

Explanation and Examples

A wall may be considered “large” if it has a blank surface substantially greater in size than similar walls of neighboring buildings. The following are examples of design solutions for blank walls and retaining walls:

- creating small setbacks, indentations, or employing changes in material color, texture and pattern breaks up the wall surface and creates a more human-scale
- setting the wall back and providing a landscaped or raised planter bed in front of the wall, including plant materials that could grow to screen the wall
- installing a durable vertical trellis in front of or on the wall for climbing vines or other plant material
- providing art (mosaic, mural, decorative masonry pattern, sculpture, relief, etc.) over a substantial portion of the blank wall surface

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

Explanation and Examples

Project design should be reviewed for its contribution to enhancing the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security within the environment under review. To do this, the question needs to be answered: Do the design elements detract from or do they reinforce feelings of security in the residents, workers, shoppers and visitors who enter the area?

Techniques that can help promote safety include the following:

- providing adequate lighting
- retaining clear lines of sight
- use of semi-transparent security screening, rather than opaque walls, where appropriate
- avoiding blank, windowless walls that attract graffiti and that do not permit residents or workers to observe the street

D-11 Commercial Transparency

Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.